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Senate passes Sen. Kuipers' effort to replace MEAP test

LANSING – The Senate today approved legislation that would replace the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test for high-school students with a test based on a college-entrance exam.

Education Committee Chairman Sen. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland, sponsored the main part of the package, Senate Bill 1153, as a way to better prepare students for college and the workplace. Kuipers said the legislation follows the recommendation of the Education Alliance of Michigan. The alliance issued a report earlier this year urging the Legislature to study the replacement of the high-school MEAP test.

“Whether high-school seniors are entering college or the workplace after graduation, they need a test that determines how prepared they are for Michigan’s 21st-century economy,” Kuipers said. “This change would give students and their parents a strong reason to take the test seriously. We want to use a standardized test that students can use to apply to college instead of one that is used only by the state.”

The proposed test, called the Michigan Merit Exam, would use a combination of a college-admissions test, a workplace skills exam and a social-studies component. The test would first be given to students in 2007. The effort is supported by a broad coalition of state leaders in secondary and post-secondary education. The college-admissions test to be used isn’t specified in the legislation.

The change is needed because the MEAP turnaround time is too long for teachers to take advantage of results to improve student achievement. Colleges and universities also don’t consider it when making admissions decisions.

The idea of replacing the MEAP test also is being looked at by the commission chaired by Lt. Gov. John Cherry. The commission was started to find ways to increase the number of Michigan residents who receive college degrees or other post-secondary training. Kuipers serves as member of that commission. The panel’s formal name is the Lieutenant Governor’s Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth.

The legislation now heads to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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